

Dear, dear community,

I am so delighted by the way in which our community is taking up the call to make mask-wearing in public the social norm, in such a crafty and fun way. All around West Marin, people are sewing masks, supporting friends and neighbors to wear them every time we go out in public. Yay! So important. Just in case there is confusion about what these home-made, cotton masks (tightly woven cotton material, like quilting fabric or batik, in two layers, performs best in studies) can and cannot do, I'd like offer important clarification:

- Homemade cotton masks **protect others** from the droplets that come out of your mouth and nose.
- They help **decrease spread**, especially due to asymptomatic or presymptomatic carriers of the virus.
- They **do help remind us to not touch our face**, especially our nose and mouth.
- The **do not make it safe to relax on social distancing** and staying home
- Wearing a mask **does not make it safe for an elder** or those at high risk to go out.
- They **do not** offer enough protection to care for an ill family member.
- They **do send a signal that we are caring for and protecting one another** from our own possible contagion, and that we are protecting health care workers by reserving surgical masks and N95 masks for them.

Please remember to wash them after you have worn them, take them on and off by the ties or elastic, and do not touch the front of the mask as you might be getting virus on your hands.

Do develop the skill of smiling with your eyes, and expressing gratitude to the sewing members of our community. Now is a great time to dust off your machine, if you have one, and pick a pattern and support your community.

With care,
Anna O'Malley, MD